



Public and
Commercial
Services Union

DWP NW Regional Committee NEWSLETTER

November 2021

Insulting our Work Coaches Performance has to stop!

At the previous meeting PCS have had with the NW Regional Director we were told that the performance figures for our Work Coach members showed that on average they are 'only':

- Having 10 appointments a day booked into their diary
- Of which only 7 attends
- Of which only 4 Face to Face appointments attend

At the meeting on 30/11/21 it was reported that this had risen to 8 attending a day of which 6 were Face to Face.

Despite PCS challenging this and making it clear that this was not our experience, he continued to suggest this means our Work Coaches are still only doing up to 3 hours productive work a day and that *"our performance is difficult to defend"*. More worryingly it was also said that *"if only averaging seeing 6 customers a day, why do we need all these Fixed Term Appointment"* members.

He insisted that he was satisfied that their statistics reflected performance accurately and that PCS should be working with management to "improve" performance as these figures.

PCS believe that you have a right to know that your Area Director is implying that you must be sitting idle for hours a day, every day. PCS find this suggestion deeply insulting.

No Performance Targets?

Despite there being no individual targets, the constant pressure around numbers of appointments, provision referrals to JETs/JFS/Restart and Kickstart applications is relentless with the 'Race for Jobs' at the forefront of every meeting with little focus on customers moving into work.

The only performance target that UC Management seem to care about is an expectation that on average at least 15 F2F appointments are being attended a day per Work Coach. This is driving 'perverse behaviour' across our Jobcentres and is damaging to the service we want to deliver.

To calculate performance, UC Management are simply totalling the working hours of all UC Work Coaches badged to a site to determine the Full Time Equivalent (WTE) number of Work Coaches. Then by dividing the number of appointments booked, and attended, by the WTE figure for the site and dividing it by 5 to get a daily average figure per Work Coach. They then do this again just for the F2F appointments booked and attended.

They have calculated that to achieve the expected minimum of 15 F2F attending a day, 20 to 25 appointments a day need to be booked into diaries; reducing Work Coach autonomy to decide the frequency and means of contact with their customers; the changing of Telephone appointments to F2F; the length of appointment, having to seek permission to rebook an appointment if the

customer contacts us to ask for it to be moved, and running diaries when someone is on leave or running ghost diaries in general. Many Work Coaches have had skillsets removed from their diaries or have to case conference to book certain appointments and a number of sites have reported the extension of diary opening times between 9am & 6pm with the removal of any admin time to check and maintain caseloads or respond to journal messages.

Work Coaches are being told to book customers more frequently than required, some even up to daily interventions, and refusing to pay travel costs to travel to attend additional interviews. This is at a time when they have removed the £20 UC uplift, and energy and food costs are soaring

UC Managements own Performance Calculations are fundamentally flawed

UC Management are basing their figures on all WC's being available 5 days a week for 52 weeks a year or 260 days a year. However, a WC is funded for doing 209 days a year after taking off such things as annual leave, public and privilege holidays, training, sickness absence etc. By wrongly using a figure of a WC being available for 260 days their calculations are misleading

Using the figure of 209 day's availability a year equates to a full time WC being available for 80% of the year, not 100% as being used. It results in inaccurate performance data and means WC's are effectively having to over-compensate to cover known absences. The effect on the performance calculations is significantly detrimental. It is unfair and demoralising to both our Work Coaches and Managers and causing unnecessary work-related stress.

Meaningless and arbitrary unless 'whole performance' of the job is measured

To suggest that our Work Coach members are being able to deliver the outcomes that UC Management claim credit for, of getting people into work or onto 'provision' by just dealing with a handful of people a day in a fraction of their working day is staggering, and demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of what the WC role encompasses. The following are areas of work that are currently ignored

- No account being taken of the amount of 'contact time' work coaches are undertaking e.g. the duration of appointment times. They are only measuring the number of appointments so the appointments that take longer, for example; Self Employed Gateway, First Commitments or Commitment Reviews are not only being ignored in measuring performance but result in even more shorter appointments being booked to meet the arbitrary numerical average attendance targets per WC.
- Non customer- contact time work activities are being ignored, including FTA action, Journal Entries, FSF paperwork, team meetings, training etc.
- Not taking into account Work Coaches working Virtually for a site, those working from home for health reasons, or those hybrid-working due to site capacity issues, forcing up the number of F2F appointments being booked for those attending the office
- Digital appointments appear to be excluded from any calculation.

The NW DWP PCS Regional Committee will continue to escalate your concerns and feedback through to Senior leaders and the PCS Group Executive Committee, and advise that members report any instances of work-related stress via SOARS and discuss their concerns with the local branch reps.